17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11

is a most important grouping intermediate between the compound family and its individual members. It is a semi-autonomous domestic unit with its own kitchen economy, its own property rights in cattle, goats, sheep, chickens, land, tools, granaries, and food stocks. Correspondingly it is responsible for its own building and repairs, fuel and water collecting, food provision and allocation from harvest to harvest, and has its own ritual rights and obligations. But the husband is an element common to them all and, having his own rights and duties in respect of these matters, binds them closely together. Livestock are herded co-operatively, not only for all the elementary families of a homestead, but for several homesteads together. The husband is the titular head of a corporate group, not an absolute rightholder.[1] He allocates land, cattle, and other property accruing to the compound family group among its elementary families, and this allocation limits the proportion in which it will eventually be inherited by the sons in each elementary family. He is also able to make levies of property for special purposes from all his elementary families. But in all situations involving social groups wider than the homestead, its head is subject to the decisions of the leader-in-council of the lineage segment to which he belongs. The exclusiveness of elementary families is potentially high, but in practice depends on the skill of the homestead head in securing and maintaining harmony, and on the natural compatibility or otherwise of co-wives. When these factors favour, co-wives may be seen co-operating in many tasks, taking it in turns to supply the husband—or one another's children—with food, combining as a team for garden work, or sharing one another's water-supply. But it cannot be denied that the Luo regard friction between co-wives as being a more normal state of affairs. Behind these situational variations lies the inviolable right of the husband to regular cooked food from each wife, of each wife to regular sexual attention from the husband, and the general responsibility of each elementary family for its own self-maintenance granted its rightful assistance from the husband in his proper part of each task.

The rearing of children is woven into this framework. The baby's first contacts are normally with its mother, who may not finally wean it till it is about two years old, unless as a result of a subsequent pregnancy she has to do so sooner; for suckling a child with a younger sibling in the womb is regarded as robbing and endangering the latter. The baby sleeps in its mother's hut at night and sleeps and later plays near it during the day. It is most closely associated with the other members of its own elementary family, especially the female ones circling round the hearth for the preparation and cooking of food. Other members of the compound family will be hardly less well known from their presence together inside the homestead hedge, but all non-members of the homestead will be comparative strangers except very close relatives or near neighbours who are common visitors within it.

Babies of either sex are soon each put in the charge of one of the older unmarried girls, probably a real or classificatory sister. This brings them in contact with the world outside the homestead, where a number of these nurse-girls (Dholuo *japid*) meet regularly in informal play groups. By the time children can run about on their own they too form play groups, including both girls and boys from several homesteads. Gradually the interests of the two sexes diverge, the boys going off with

[1] The Luo homestead in all phases of its life-cycle would contain the definition of a corporate group in Weber's sense. See *Theory of Political and Economic Organization*, p. 135.

17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11

6. Liver and remaining ribs and offal: for all the women of the homestead. 613
7. Kidneys: for the woman's sisters still in their mother's house and their friends. 583
8. Customary portion for the eldest married daughter of the woman's mother.
9. Customary portions to be eaten, some raw, some cooked by *bale*, by all the elders assembled for the distribution. 606

It is worth while to treat this one rite at length, because it is the prototype of so many others. Its especial significance is that it takes place at the lowest level of segmentary organization, that it is bound to occur in every family as often as a daughter is married off, and that it draws into a structured participation not merely lineage leaders and senior elders but every man, woman, and child in the family. When the Luo youngster of either sex begins to grasp why, on certain occasions, it receives a special supply of kidney or ribs to roast on the fire with its playmates, its education in the theory of lineage structure has begun. The same holds true for all the wives of the men who bring home their portions of meat to be cooked, and share them with favourite wives or children, or allow them the scraps. [867]

There are many other occasions on which meat has to be ritually divided. In every case a similar procedure is followed, with the same articulation of lineage structure. There are the sacrifices previously mentioned, which are made to the ancestor indicated by the diviner as the cause of some misfortune. Sacrifice is also made usually within a year or so of the death of any elder of importance, and the level of lineage whose major segments are called to share in it depends upon the dead man's status. If he took part in the councils of the maximal lineage its major segments would certainly be called; if he was of less importance the major segments of a lineage at some lower level would be called. A further custom occasioning a demonstration of lineage segmentation is that whereby an elder of importance chooses a bull to be eaten after his death, the segments of his lineage dividing it among themselves according to principles similar to those of *rite*. 613 782 769

Besides sacrifices, every beer party, of whatever size and on whatever occasion, is also a display of lineage structure at one level or another. These parties are exceedingly frequent, and most frequent of all in the comparative leisure of the dry season, when there is a pause between the completed harvest and the next cultivation not yet begun. At this time few weeks will pass without a beer party somewhere in the vicinity, and often they follow on one another for days on end. In every one there is a core of elders who epitomize the structure of the lineage segments participating in the occasion. This is all quite apart from the small quantities of beer which old men like to drink with two or three neighbours independently of any ceremonial pretext. But all parties of any size have a ritual occasion, whether it be one of the innumerable occasions resulting from death which are strung out over a period of at least one and often two years, or in connexion with marriage, or for the settlement of the periodic and seasonal affairs of a class A lineage. 613 574 273 [571]

In the larger beer parties the pitchers of beer are distributed among lineage segments in the same way as are the joints of meat after a sacrifice. In all of them the order of drinking is strictly determined by lineage seniority, starting with the representatives of the major segments of the superordinate lineage, in the order of seniority of their eponymous ancestors, and downwards through the subordinate levels of the line particularly concerned. The level of major segments involved is always an index 613 574 576

17: Southall E-9 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Lee FL11

of the importance of the occasion, and of the status of the individual concerned in it, and the procedure further epitomizes the internal structure of these groups.

For present purposes the significance of all these ritually occasioned social gatherings is that their place of meeting is always the family homestead, and in this way from time to time even the remotest members of the least important family have vividly impressed upon them the segmentary principles of the social structure to which they belong. The underlying economic and domestic arrangements through which these assemblies are, as it were, financed by the provision of food—which may be required to feed large numbers of people for days on end—themselves occasion a subsidiary marshalling of lineage organization. Convenience dictates that the families most concerned in this shall be those which are not only agnatically but spatially nearest to one another. This means that the levels of structure epitomized are similar to those involved in the *nia* ceremony. The primary organizational responsibility falls on the chief wife or widow of the homestead of assembly, who ordains the contributions of its other female household heads. Then the senior wife of the head of the *ayuolo* group at the next higher level of segmentation has a like duty to organize the contributions of her group, followed by the female heads of each *ayuolo* co-ordinate to hers in order of genealogical seniority. After this the next higher level of segment is called into play, and so on, the number of subsequent levels which must be called upon depending on the scale of the occasion, as reflected in the numbers of those who attend and the length of time that they stay. Thus not only as members of the entertaining homestead, but also as members of the many neighbouring homesteads drawn in to assist in the communities, the housewives and elder daughters who cook the food, the young children of both sexes who must run as messengers and act as carriers of the food itself, all repeatedly have impressed upon their experience the lower levels of the lineage structure which permeates their society. In the rural isolation of a subsistence economy these are the events which loom large on the social horizon, occupying the mind and feeding conversation. It is hardly surprising that a people like the Luo grow up with a complete practical grasp, at a level which requires no abstract formulation, of those principles of social organization which seem at first so intricate and confusing to the outsider.

Ayuolo segments within the minimal *dhoot* and *gweng'* also act as mutual assistance groups. It is within these that cattle may be borrowed for making marriage payments. Nowadays it is the members of such groups who rely on one another for the loan of small sums of money required in the many transactions resulting from new needs. They tend to meet for consideration of any matters of common concern; these meetings are rather informal, but usually recognize the leadership of the member who is eldest by lineage seniority, and are often accompanied by the drinking of beer.

VII. THE MECHANISM OF SEGMENTATION

It is now possible to give further details of how certain class B segments (*ayuolo*) within a minimal class A lineage achieve class A status themselves as units of primary settlement, the basic segments in the articulated system of *gweng'* and *dhoot*. When this occurs, of course, the previous minimal class A segment is raised from its